

## Refugee Week

*The United Nations World Refugee Day takes place every year on 20 June to call attention to the plight of refugees around the world, which corresponds with Refugee Week (18 June – 24 June 2023) held in Australia to acknowledge, reflect on, and celebrate the lives and contributions of refugees. The theme this year is 'Finding Freedom', focusing on what it means to be free for the millions of refugees on their journeys to freedom and safety. It highlights the importance of living life free from violence, war and persecution.*

As we continue to focus Mercy Moments on Catholic Identity, we can easily connect solidarity to the missional call of accompanying, serving and advocating for refugees and forcibly displaced peoples.

In Fratelli Tutti Pope Francis invites us to

*... think of the refugees and displaced, those who suffered the effects of atomic radiation or chemical attacks, the mothers who lost their children, and the boys and girls maimed or deprived of their childhood. Let us hear the true stories of these victims of violence, look at reality through their eyes, and listen with an open heart to the stories they tell. In this way, we will be able to grasp the abyss of evil at the heart of war. Nor will it trouble us to be deemed naive for choosing peace (§261).*

Pope Francis has spoken a lot on this topic and implores us to do all we can:

*Migration is inevitable. It's been happening since time immemorial. It's not just happened now, but the challenge today is much different than earlier... So what are we really doing with migration?*

Pope Francis encourages us to create ever new spaces for sharing and to continue together on a journey with migrants and refugees by sharing meals and stories, and also by putting into action a series of everyday gestures to remind the world "we are one human family", that we need each other, and that together it is possible to create a "wave of solidarity" which is capable of moving the stones of indifference, prejudice and fear.

To **welcome**, to **protect**, to **promote**, to **integrate** were the four verbs chosen by Pope Francis as he called for action in his Message for the 104th World Day of Migrants and Refugees in 2018 (<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2018-06/pope-caritas-world-dayrefugees-share-the-journey.html>). Five years on these four words are still paramount to supporting refugees and displaced people.

During Refugee Week, may we continue to promote and welcome refugees and encourage successful integration, which enables them to live in safety and to continue making a valuable contribution to Australia. Let us also remember those who still languish in refugee detention centres across our country awaiting the opportunity to live in freedom.

### Prayer for Refugees

#### Justice Bringer,

**Bother us. Keep after us. Open our eyes.  
Widen our hearts. Change our judgements.  
Urge us. Chase us. Badger us, until we act  
On behalf of the sixty-five million people  
Whose tears fall on foreign soil.**

Joyce Rupp

(Extract from Prayers of Boundless Compassion, p46-47)



Reflection: What actions can your ministry take to better support refugees ?

*We acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional owners of the lands on which our ministries exist and the Elders both past and present on whose land we walk, work and live. We support the Uluru Statement from the Heart.*